

# ONGOING STUDY 1

## FISHWORKERS' STATUS—AN ICSF PROJECT

We have volumes of statistics on fish—but very little on fishermen. This well known fact prompted the ICSF to begin work on a comprehensive study. We reproduce below extracts from a brief report dated September 1987, signed by John Kurien, the coordinator of the project

The study on the 'Status of the Fishworker' was mandated by our formation meeting in November 1986. It was to be a secondary data collection exercise and also a test of our ability as members of the Collective to undertake a collaborative project while remaining in our respective places of work.

The outline for the study and the format were prepared and posted to members in February 1987. By 31 August 1987 I had received replies from 30 countries and two provinces within two countries. The most encouraging was from Latin America.

### Objectives of the project

The socio-economic, labour and employment status of fishworkers is never static. It is either improving or getting worse. If we agree with this proposition, then we must agree that there is no 'final' report which we can produce—there is a need for constant updating.

### Details of the project work

#### Who are the fishworkers?

Our first job is to define who are fishworkers. Are we only talking about small-scale manual sea-fishermen? Do we include in our definition the crew members on large trawlers? Will the women workers in the fish processing plants and the men involved in full-time aquaculture operations be considered?

The best answer is to go by the Rome Conference (ICFWS) definition. 'Fishworkers—men, women and children engaged as small fishers, crew members, processing workers and sellers.' By small fishers' is meant manual sea-fishermen, inland fishermen and those involved in aquaculture.

So our analysis is primarily about the *fishworkers* and NOT about the total population dependent upon fish-related activities. So only the *workers*; those who labour, whether they are men, women or children, will be the subject of our project.

#### Activity coverage

Having defined our fishworker, we must now consider the scope of our enquiry: our report should include fishworkers in the three main economic activities of the fisheries economy. They are:

1. HARVESTING (from the sea, inland waters, rivers and aquaculture);
2. HANDLING AND PROCESSING (i.e. all post-harvest activity);
3. MARKETING (the physical act of distributing fish).

In most countries we find that in each of these activities there will be more than one category of fishworker.

#### Area coverage

We must cover a whole country. However, in large countries it is often not possible to make just one report for the whole country. In such circumstances we should make a report for each homogeneous province or area of the country.

### Items to be included in the Report

This is, of course, the most important part. It is very difficult to give a full and proper listing of items to be included. To overcome this, we have devised a tabular grid for guidance. Since our initial objective is to create a rough but comprehensive picture of the status of fishworkers country by country, the format will suffice for our work in 1988. Refinements can follow in 1988! The following page gives the items and codes to be used to fill in the cells on this tabular grid.

#### How to fill in the Tabular Format

The first thing to do is make a full and accurate listing of all the categories of fishworkers in each of the three activities mentioned above, avoiding as far as possible any overlapping. Now write out these categories in the cells numbered '1' to '10' at the top of the columns in the grid.

For each category now fill up the cells down the column with the appropriate information (using the codes indicated)—the bulk of the work! Of course, for those of you from countries with numerous fishworkers and large inter-provincial variations (e.g. the Philippines and Brazil) it may be necessary to fill in many of the forms—one for each province and (if possible) one for the whole country. That's no easy task!

When filling it in, it is always a good idea to indicate the sources of your data, particularly for figures relating to population.

There's one more thing to do. Write a short note about the fishworkers in your country based on the information you have entered on the grid.

For your assistance a similar form—filled up for Kerala State, India—can be sent to you so that you have an idea of how your completed form should look. (However, please note that the form being used for our present study is a bit different from the enclosed example).

#### On adding more items

On the enclosed form, there's only provision for 10 categories of fishworkers (columns) and there are only 21 items of information required (rows). Should you want to add more, feel free to extend it.

Also, if you have written—or come across—any good article or case studies of fishworkers in your country/region, please send a copy of the same to the project coordinator.

#### Project coordinator

Please address all your communications about this project to John Kurien at the address below. (A copy of the correspondence can also be sent to the ICSF office if you wish).

*Good luck with your study. Please send your results direct to:*

*John Kurien CDS  
Ulloor Trivandrum 695011, INDIA.*

*or to the Secretariat:*

*rue Gretry 65,  
1000 Brussels, BELGIUM*

**Status of Fishworkers**

A project of ICSF

A profile of Labour and Employment Conditions

Country/Province: Columbia

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Harvesting			Handling and processing			Marketing		
<b>A. Number of persons working in this group</b>	28500	1500	80000	190	3000	1600	168	130	168
<b>B. Sexes involved</b> Primarily/Only men (M); women (W); both (B)	M	M	M	B	B	B	B	B	B
<b>C. Age structure</b> Below 15 (A); 15-20 (B); 20-50 (C); above 50 (D)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
<b>D. Nature of occupation</b> Main (M); secondary/part time (S)	S	S	S	M	S	S	M	S	M
<b>E. Social Status</b> Compared to other workers: High (H); low (L); same (S)	L	L	L	S	L	L	S	L	S
<b>F. Level of literacy</b> Compared to other workers: High (H); low (L); same (S)	L	L	L	S	L	L	S	L	S
<b>G. Level of formal education</b> Compared to other workers: High (H); low (L); same (S)									
<b>H. Religion</b> Animist (A); Buddhist (B); Christian-Catholic (CC); Christian-Protestant (CP); Hindu (H); Moslem (M); Others (O)	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC
<b>I. Estimation of portion of year employed</b> (in days)	220	260	210	360	100	220	360	150	360
<b>J. Degree of seasonality of employment</b> High (H); Low (L); Related to availability of fish (FS); Weather conditions (WE); others (O)	H WS WE	H WS WE	H WS WE	L FS	H FS	L O	L FS	H FS	L FS
<b>K. Employment status</b> Self-employed (SE); Wage labourer (WL); Family labour (FL); income share (SI)	FL SE	FL SE	FL SE	WL	SE IS	SE FL	WL	FL SE	WL
<b>L. Nature of payment of emoluments</b> Piece rate (PR); Daily wage (DW); Salary (S); Share of Net income (SI)	PR SI	PR SI	PR SI	S	PR SI	PR SI	S	PR SI	S
<b>M. Per capita daily income</b> Give in local currency the income range	\$ US 8-10	\$ US 15-20	\$ US 3-4	\$ US 3-4	\$ US 5	\$ US 3-4	\$ US 3-4	\$ US 3-5	\$ US 4-6
<b>N. Extent of child labour involved</b> High (H); Low (L); Engaged as: Family Labour (FL); Wage labour (WL)	L FL	L FL	H FL	L FL	H FL	H FL	L FL	H FL	L FL
<b>O. Extent immigrant labour involved</b> From within the province/country (P/C) From outside the province/country (O)	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C	L P/C
<b>P. Extent to which they emigrate</b> Substantial (S); moderate (M); little (L) Within country (WC); to other countries (OC)	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC	L WC
<b>Q. Level of accident risk</b> High (H); Low (L)	H	H	H	L	L	L	L	L	L
<b>R. Existence of minimum wage legislation</b> Yes or no	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>S. Existence of welfare legislation</b> Yes or no	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>T. Access to social security &amp; welfare provided by employees</b> Yes or no				Yes			Yes		Yes
<b>Provided by State (Yes or No)</b>	No	No	No		No	No		No	
<b>U. Level of association with</b> Coo-operative movement	W	W	W	NE	W	W	NE	W	NE
Trade union movement	NE								
Voluntary agencies Strong (S); moderate (M); weak (W); non-existent (NE)	W	W	W	W	W	NE	S	W	S

1: Artisanal Fishermen working on non-mechanized and motorized craft in coastal waters 2: Fishermen working on mechanized boats in coastal waters

3: Artisanal fishermen working on non-mechanized craft in inland waters 4: Workers at fish landing centres involved in unloading, sorting and icing

5: Workers involved in traditional methods of fish curing and drying 6: Workers involved in prawn peeling sheds 7: Workers in fish processing firms

8: Workers involved in the marketing of fish within the community 9: Workers involved in marketing activities in the country. *Compiled by Francisco Gutierrez B.*